

DRAFT ADDENDUM TO OROVILLE RELICENSING R-5 – ASSESSMENT OF RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT

TRAILS AND RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT

In total, there are about 75 miles of non-motorized trails available in the study area. All trails are available for hiking/walking. Of the total 75 miles, about 64.5 miles are available for biking and about 38.5 miles are available for equestrian use. Designated trails for hiking/biking/equestrian use total about 37 miles, followed by hiking/biking (about 28 miles). There are about 9 miles of hiking-only trails, and 1.6 miles of hiking/equestrian-only trail at Sycamore Hill on the Dan Beebe Trail. In the spring of 2002, DPR designated most of the non-motorized trails in the study area as multiple-use. Previously, 17 miles of trails were designated hiking/equestrian use only and did not allow biking (DWR 2004).

Exceptions to the multiple-use designation include the Roy Rogers and Loafer Creek Loop Trails, which are open to multiple-use on even-numbered days and open to hikers and equestrians only on odd-numbered days; a portion of the Brad P. Freeman Trail is hiking/biking only; as mentioned the Sycamore Hill segment of the Dan Beebe Trail is hiking/equestrian only; and the Chaparral and Wyk Island Trails are hiking only. There are five formal trailheads within the Project Boundary and several other access points within the Study area (DWR 2004).

All fire roads within the LOSRA are also open to biking, hiking, and equestrian use. Within the OWA, bicycling is permitted, but only on roads open to vehicles (DWR 2004).

DWR ROLE IN TRAIL MANAGEMENT

DWR's responsibility lies in FERC license 2100 compliance, and coordinating Project trail issues among several adjacent recreation management jurisdictions. A Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trails Program for the Project area could outline each agencies' (DPR, DFG, DWR, FRRPD, USFS, BLM) specific responsibilities and identify an implementation plan which would likely be geographically based. It could identify existing trails, how they were developed, how new trails will be developed and how trails will be managed and how management will be coordinated. Trails and trailheads have been reviewed to varying degrees in R-2 – Recreation Safety Assessment, R-6 – ADA Accessibility Assessment, R-8 – Recreation Carrying Capacity, R-10 – Recreation Facility Inventory and Condition Report, R-11 – Public Use Impacts, and R-17 – Recreation Needs Analysis. Trailheads have also been evaluated in R-1 – Vehicular Access Study

DPR ROLE IN TRAIL MANAGEMENT

DPR manages more than 3,000 miles of trails Statewide. The trail management program began with the California Conservation Corp which mainly built new trails in the 1930's. DPR currently sets broad goals for trails within the state of California. DPR's proposed General Plan for the LOSRA will address trends, needs, and opportunities. Identifying the vision and priorities for resource protection and development, interpretation, and facilities are some objectives of the proposed General Plan.

DPR has issued two draft documents in the last several years, one a California Recreation Trails Plan (July 2001) which has since been finalized (July 2003) and the second a draft Statewide Trails Policy (2004). DPR has just finished receiving public and stakeholder comments on the draft policy and will be finalizing it in the next year after considering those comments. The policy will outline the process for implementing the action guidelines stated in the Recreation Trails Plan (pers. comm, McKowen 2004).

TRAILS "TASK FORCE" REPORT

A Trails Task Force led by various stakeholders including representatives from the JPA (Dangermond Group) and DPR was formed at the request of the Recreation and Socioeconomic Work Group (RSWG). A "Trails Committee Report" was submitted to the RSWG in January 2002. This report was intended to provide background for the trails component of the anticipated new Project 2100 Recreation Plan. This report attempted to resolve a number of trails planning issues, but did not detail specific alignments or review feasibility issues related to environmental compliance, construction or property ownership.

RESOURCE ACTION DEVELOPMENT

Components of the Trails Committee Report, in large part comprised of a range of individual trails-related Resource Actions, were included in a Resource Action Identification Form (RAIF) called the Lake Oroville Recreation Area Trails System.

CHANGE TO MULTIPLE-USE TRAILS

As described above, in the spring of 2002, DPR designated most of the non-motorized trails in the study area as multiple-use. Previously, 17 miles of trails were hiking/equestrian use only and did not allow biking. Some trail users in the study area would prefer that these trails return to their previous use designations. However, the vast majority of survey respondents using trails did not have encounters with other trail users that they felt put them at-risk. However, the On-site Recreation survey was not designed to identify if trail users had encounters that they felt lessened their trail-related recreation experience. The survey was

also not designed to specifically elicit opinions of survey respondents regarding the multiple-use designation.

It is proposed that a future Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trails Program further explore the potential for conflicts due to multiple-use designation. If significant risks or conflicts are occurring, a future Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trail Program could outline management strategies to address actual or perceived user safety issues and/or user experience effects. Trail use restrictions or designations, trail locations, trail O&M, and I&E needs could also be addressed in such a plan (DWR 2004).

DPR has been implementing a Statewide policy to convert all trails to multi-use, (four feet wide) unless there is a compelling reason not to (such as for safety). DPR's goal in changing trails to multiple-use was to accommodate the increasing demand for trails within the State and within the Lake Oroville area. Changes to multiple-use status at Lake Oroville has included:

- Dan Beebe Trail with the exception of Sycamore Hill;
- Brad Freeman Trail; and
- The Bidwell Canyon Trail.

Some equestrian trail users have filed a motion with FERC to intervene because they are not satisfied with the change in trail use status nor with the decision-making process DPR employed when changing the trail status. Additionally, the interveners were unhappy with the widening of the Dan Beebe Trail as part of the conversion, and questioned the decision-making process undertaken to initiate the widening (Davis et al. 2003). FERC responded by ordering DPR/DWR to change the trails back to their original designation (FERC 2002), in part based on a literal interpretation of a descriptive error in DWR's 1993 Amended Recreation Plan (NPS 2004; pers. comm., Rischbieter 2004). DWR responded to FERC requesting that DPR not be required to change the trails back to single uses and are awaiting a response from FERC (pers. comm., Rischbieter 2004).

CONCLUSIONS

The advantage of providing multiuse trails Statewide is in the opportunity to provide more access to every type of trail user. Potential risks between equestrian users and mountain bikes are of concern and could be more fully evaluated as part of the trail planning process for a Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trails Program Plan. As use on trails increases in the future, as it is projected to do, monitoring of use levels and trail conditions is warranted to maintain safety and quality of experiences. Capacity triggers for ecological, spatial, facility, and social capacity (that could determine future actions) could be identified as part of the Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trails Program Plan. Input from stakeholders and others should continue to be an element of management and decision-making.

A Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trails Program Plan could include some or all of several elements. For example, it could be based on an inventory of existing trails with photographs of any area requiring maintenance (such as erosion sites) and corresponding GPS/GIS data collection for geographic identification of such sites. Additionally, portions of trail where visibility is low, such as tight corners, could be documented and markers could be added in order to minimize incidents of conflict between user types on trails with more than one type of use. Additionally a Comprehensive Non-Motorized Trails Program Plan could identify and quantify the social and environmental effects of any significant future changes in trails management and usage.

Another issue is the potential to complete trail opportunities/loops within the study area. The Thermalito Forebay, Thermalito Afterbay, and Diversion Pool are areas where trails surround all or part of the waterbodies, but in some cases do not directly connect. In addition, the Lime Saddle area is lacking trail connections between major recreation facilities. The campgrounds, boat ramp, marina, and associated day use facilities are not connected by any developed trails. Any future Non-Motorized Trails Program will likely consider new trail routes in these areas with input from stakeholders and others (DWR 2004).

REFERENCES

- Davis, W.O., et al., 2003. Motion to Intervene, Comments and Protest. Filed with FERC, Docket 2100. June 5, 2003.
- DWR. 2004. R-17 – Recreation Needs Analysis
- DWR. 1993. *Proposed Amended Recreation Plan for Lake Oroville State Recreation Area.*
- FERC. 2003. Letter Subject: Recreational Trails at the Feather River Project. Letter from Salas (FERC) to Glover (DWR) November 26, 2002.
- McKowen, Ken. Manager, Statewide Trails Office. DPR. Personal communication with I. Mayes, Sr. Environmental Planner, EDAW, San Francisco, CA; July 16, 2004.
- NPS (National Park Service) 2004. Letter Subject: Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) FERC Project 2100. Letter from Williamson (NPS) to Salas (FERC) February 25, 2004
- Rischbieter, Doug. Staff Environmental Scientist, Resource Area Manager, DWR. Personal communication with I. Mayes, Sr. Environmental Planner, EDAW, San Francisco, CA; July 21, 2004.